



# Preserving Highland Park

## Protecting a Livable Community

Prepared for the Boston Landmarks Commission  
by  
Gail Sullivan Associates, Inc.

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# Preserving Highland Park

## Protecting a Livable Community

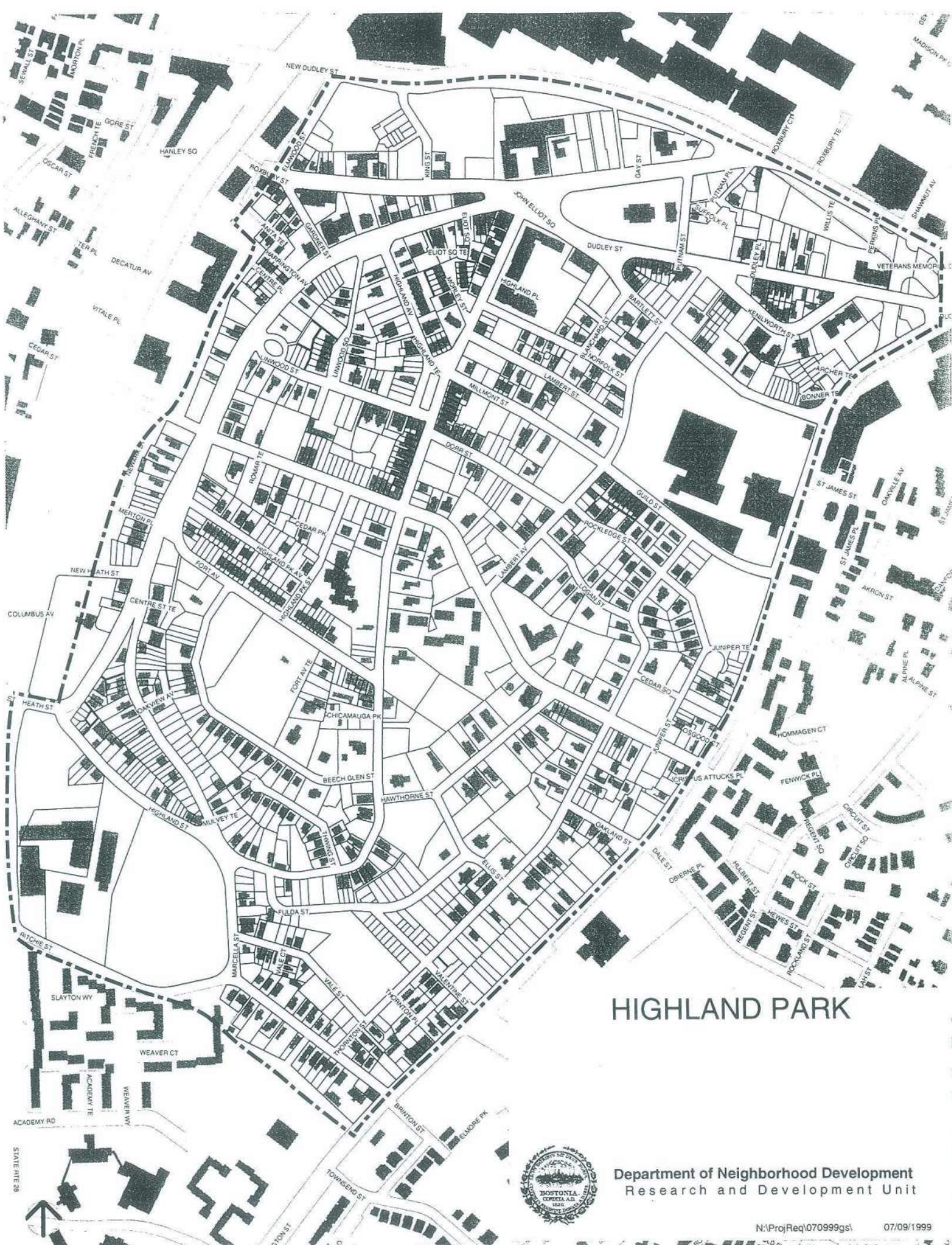
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# HIGHLAND PARK



Department of Neighborhood Development  
Research and Development Unit

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# 1- Introduction

## Why Preserve Highland Park?

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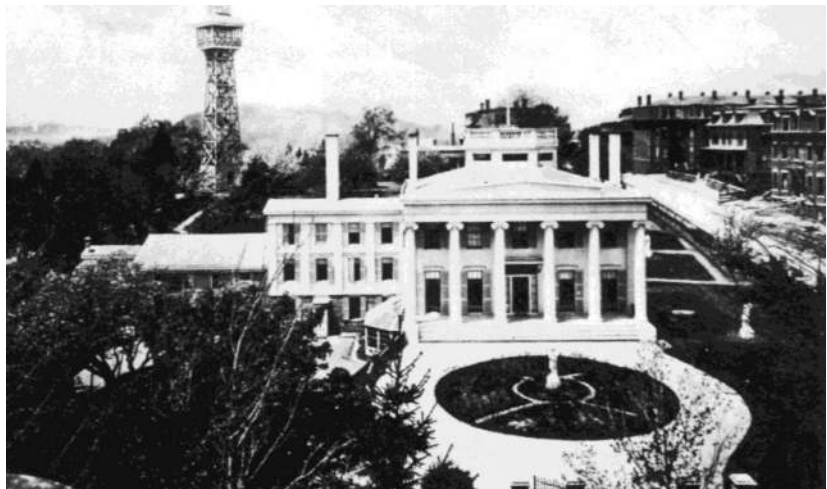
The future of the rich legacy of social and architectural history represented by the Highland Park neighborhood of Roxbury is uncertain. This small and geographically prominent neighborhood encompasses one of the oldest developed residential areas in Boston. Today at the turn of a new century it faces the combined effects of neglect, age, lack of financial resources and recent redevelopment pressures which threaten to alter its character irreparably. The purpose of this report is to guide efforts to stabilize and preserve the unique architectural fabric of Highland Park, as a vital and viable neighborhood for current inhabitants and as district already included on the National Register of Historic Places.

This report describes the neighborhood's historic significance and the many factors influencing its present day status and condition. By reviewing the current pattern of land use and the status of many of the Highland Park's buildings with respect to available public and private programs for redevelopment, this report aims to outline some preliminary strategies to preserve the historic built environment of this notable district.

- ❑ **Chapter 2** provides an overview of the unique social and development *history of Highland Park*, from its early days as a Colonial village and its significance during the

Revolutionary War through the peak of its residential development in the late nineteenth century. The neighborhood's most recent history reflects the disinvestment and neglect following Roxbury's transformation into a low income minority neighborhood by the 1960s.

- ❑ **Chapter 3** summarizes the wide range of *architectural styles* and residential building types represented by the structures in Highland Park. This chapter is useful for identifying the character and chronology of development in the neighborhood and provides typical details and examples for reference.



Alvah Kittredge House, circa 1890



Alvah Kittredge House Today

## Preservation Strategies – An Action Plan for Highland Park

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- ❑ **Chapter 4** briefly describes the elements influencing the physical status of *Highland Park today* - its residents, its current land use and ownership patterns and public decisions affecting the shape and boundaries of the district. This chapter highlights some of the most distressed and architecturally significant properties within the neighborhood, in such poor condition that they are in danger of being lost. Chapter 4 also looks at the shortcomings of recent development projects in the historic context of Highland Park. Finally, this chapter reviews neighborhood efforts to guide the physical redevelopment of Highland Park through citizens groups and other organizations.

Alvah Kittredge House Today

- ❑ **Chapter 5** assesses the many *public programs* that provide money both for rehabilitation and new construction. While a number of these current programs fund rehabilitation and repair for income-eligible homeowners, others address the redevelopment of properties owned by city agencies. The number of publicly-owned parcels constitutes both a significant redevelopment opportunity and an underlying pressure in Highland Park. Most of these programs reviewed address residential construction, but this chapter also describes several programs which include components suitable for development of neighborhood scale services and businesses.

- ❑ **Chapter 6** presents a range of *preservation strategies for*

*Highland Park*. First, current local, state and federal preservation programs are described. Also reviewed are the current Boston zoning regulations which include the only design and preservation guidelines to which any construction in Highland Park must conform. Next, several of Highland Park's unique physical and social attributes provide a basis for specific efforts to reinforce and preserve the historic character of the neighborhood.

Another strategy presented in Chapter 6 suggests rehabilitating the endangered properties previously detailed in Chapter 4 for the stabilizing effect this would have on the architectural fabric of Highland Park. A final strategy is to protect the neighborhood's historic context by implementing a City of Boston designated Architectural Conservation District, which would institute a clear preservation approach to all new work in the neighborhood.

- ❑ **Chapter 7** outlines *preliminary design guidelines* that would be implemented with the establishment of a local Architectural Conservation District. The initial public discussion to define the accompanying design guidelines is presented in this chapter. While the design guidelines address primarily physical elements, their objective is to preserve both the historic character and to protect the present day viability of Highland Park.

## 2 – A Brief History of the Neighborhood

### The Neighborhood from 1600s to Present

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Roxbury's Highland Park neighborhood provides a unique record of Boston's physical and social development. Established in 1630 as a farming settlement, it was of strategic importance to the colonists during the Revolutionary War. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century its development was characterized by subdivision of farming estates and new residential construction reflecting the merchant class's ideal of suburbanization. The late 1800s and early 1900s brought physical and social transformation due to increased industrialization of the Stoney Brook Valley, new waves of immigration, and an increasingly urban style of construction. In the mid to late 1900s, the district reflected racial transformation and accompanying disinvestment typical throughout Boston and scars of urban revitalization gone awry.

#### Colonial Era and the Shape of the Highlands

At the time of European settlement, Roxbury's landscape was a rich amalgamation of forests, ponds, river valleys, and salt marshes. Mainland Roxbury was connected to the Shawmut peninsula via a low-lying isthmus, "the Neck," separating the Charles River tidal basin from the South Bay. Land rose from sea level marshes to Roxbury Highlands via a series of hills imbedded with rocky outcroppings known as Roxbury puddingstone.

In the summer of 1630, the Massachusetts Bay Company, led by Governor John Winthrop, settled briefly in Charlestown after Salem, their original destination, proved undesirable. Ravaged by sickness and apprehensive due to persistent rumors of imminent attack by French-backed Native Americans, the company dispersed as a safety precaution. By early fall, six villages were settled in the greater Boston area. One band of settlers, led by William Pynchon, established a village in Roxbury. The first meeting house was constructed in 1632 at what is now known as John Eliot Square, and soon the Roxbury's earliest structures were sited around it.



Engraving: John Eliot Square, circa 1830

While never gaining the later commercial significance of Dudley Square, Highland Park's John Eliot Square was the institutional, social and residential hub of early Roxbury.

Natural geography and early road locations helped to define the

boundaries of Highland Park, as we know it today. Highland Park occupied the high ground overlooking the low and marshy expanse between Roxbury and Boston. The Stoney Brook and its low pastures defined the northwestern edge of the district. The only road connecting Boston to the mainland, today's Washington Street, ran along "the Neck," and passed by Eliot Square in Roxbury Highlands. Other roads leading to Cambridge, Dedham and colonial communities to the west and south encircled the base of Roxbury Highlands, known today as the Highland Park neighborhood.

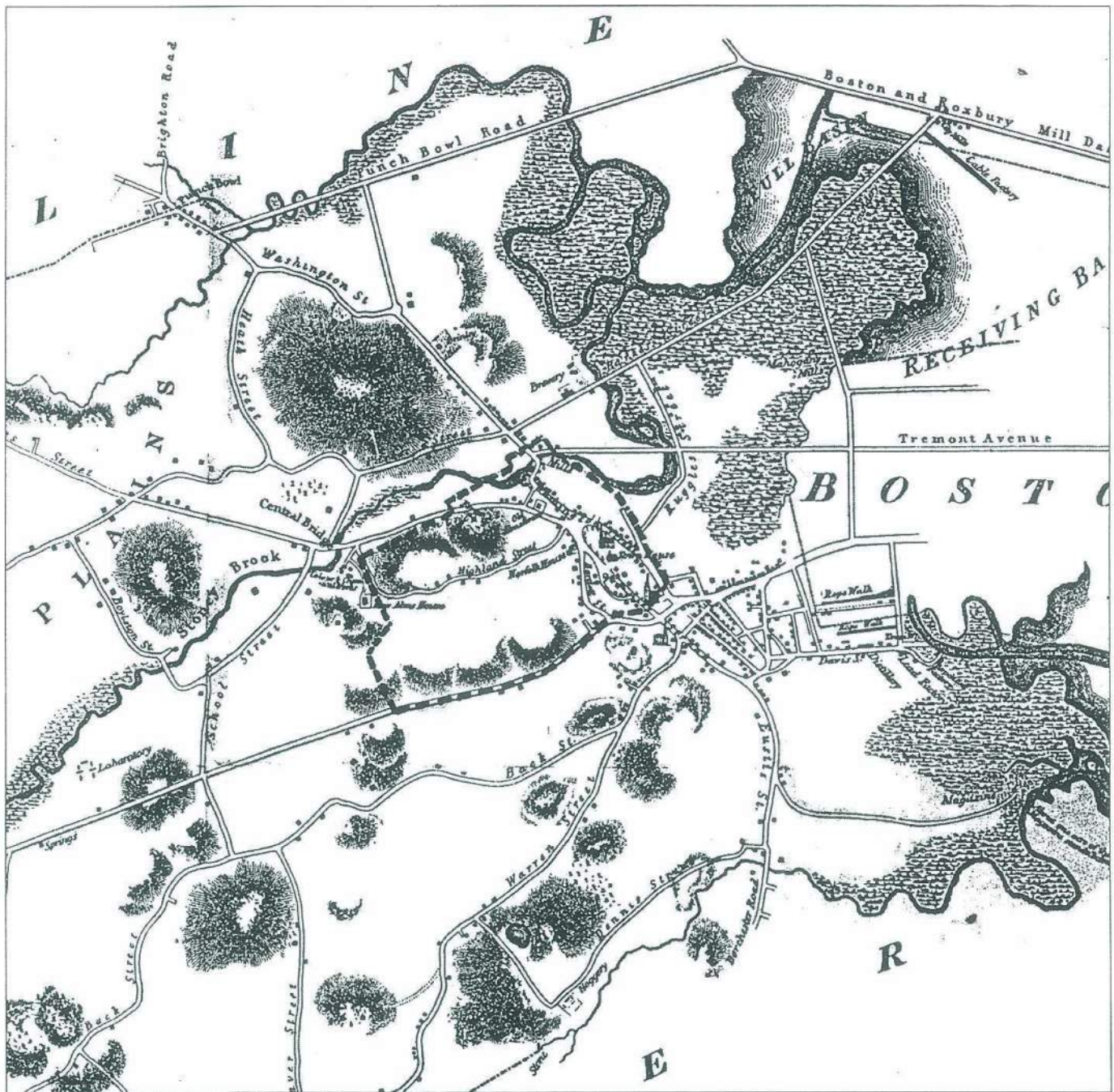
#### Revolutionary War and Early 1800s

Roxbury was of strategic importance to the colonists during the Revolutionary War as its highlands offered sweeping views of Boston Harbor and the Neck. The summit of the Highland Park area, the second highest point in Roxbury, was chosen as one of several inner harbor fortifications and an earthen works fort was constructed there in the summer of 1775. American troops used the First Church green as their campground. The Low Fort, was sited on the area roughly bounded by Cedar, Highland and Linwood Streets.<sup>i</sup>

These fortifications provided pivotal defense of Boston across the neck during the Revolutionary War



## A Brief History of the Neighborhood



Hale Survey of Roxbury  
1832  
Source: State House Library



## A Brief History of the Neighborhood

and helped prevent the British from re-occupying Boston after the Evacuation of March 1776.<sup>ii</sup> John Eliot Square was destroyed by British bombardment during the Revolutionary War. Regenerative efforts began in the 1790s and included the 1804 construction of a new Federal style meeting house at Eliot Square, now known as First Church



Photo: First Church

The Roxbury Highlands area remained sparsely settled, and primary activities continued to be farming and harvesting of woodlots until the end of the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the earliest residential developments within the district occurred in 1825 when a 25-acre parcel, including the site of the High Fort, was purchased and divided among five businessmen. The owners laid out Highland Street and Fort Avenue and created several “rural” estates on the site.<sup>iii</sup>

### Suburbanization

By the 1830s, train lines and omnibus service made a commute to Boston possible for wealthier

individuals who built second “country” homes for themselves in Roxbury Highlands. Speculators also began to construct large estates on subdivided farms.<sup>iv</sup> Alvah Kittredge purchased a lot extending from Centre Street to Highland Street and built a Greek Revival House with a side conservatory and an elaborate front garden facing Highland Street on the site of the low fort. Cedar Street was laid out soon after this time.

The suburban ideal continued after the Civil War and increased after Boston’s 1868 annexation of Roxbury.<sup>v</sup> The construction of the Gothic Revival-style Cochituate water standpipe on the site of the old High Fort embodied the public utility improvements expected with annexation. Throughout the 1800s, Roxbury Highlands experienced sustained upper-class residential development, interrupted only by the Civil War. Houses in the area illustrate the stylistic range from Federal style, Greek and Gothic Revival, Italianate to Second Empire and Victorian Revivals.

Prominent residents in the district included reformer William Lloyd Garrison, publisher of the Abolitionist paper, “The Liberator”. His home at 125 Highland Street is today a convent. Edward Everett Hale also resided in the district. His Greek Revival house still stands, though relocated to 12 Moreland Street. By the 1870s, nearly all of the present-day streets had been laid out. Due to the demand for housing in this area, lot sizes were further subdivided, and row houses similar to those in Back Bay were introduced to Roxbury Highlands. These tended to be Second Empire or Italianate structures for wealthy families. Many remain standing

including the Marble Block at 28-46 Cedar Street 5-8 Alvah Kittredge Square and buildings along Marcella Street.

Photo: Cochituate Standpipe



### Urbanization in the late 1800s

Industrial development, including breweries, foundries and machine shops, clustered along the Stoney Brook valley, by the base of Roxbury Highlands. Housing for factory workers was primarily located in lower Roxbury. The Louis Prang Chromolithograph Company, built in 1867 at 270-280 Roxbury Street, was a prominent exception. Some worker housing was constructed near the factory on the hill. Prang also built his Second Empire mansion at 47 Centre Street, in close proximity to his business.

By 1889, streetcar service was initiated along Washington Street, facilitating the arrival of upwardly mobile immigrants and spurring the relocation of wealthier class to more distant suburbs. The type and housing in demand in the Roxbury Highlands neighborhood began to change. Multiple-unit buildings, such as triple-deckers and a few apartment blocks

## A Brief History of the Neighborhood



Walling Survey

1856

Source: State House Library



were constructed to house working-class Irish and Italian residents and later, Jewish immigrants of the early-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>vi</sup> Larger commercial blocks including the Cox Building are still standing at the intersection of Dudley and Bartlett streets were constructed

Recognizing the historical significance of the area, the firm of Frederick Law Olmsted was hired to design Fort Hill Park at the location of the colonial High Fort. Other urban parks were established, including Cedar Park and Kittredge Square.

## Twentieth Century

Middle-class African Americans began moving to Roxbury Highlands in the early-to-mid 1900s. They were followed by lower income African-Americans who had lived primarily in more affordable lower Roxbury <sup>vii</sup>. By the 1950s the neighborhood became predominantly African-American. Some large single-family homes were divided into multiple units to accommodate the lower incomes of new residents. As disinvestment followed and property were razed or left to deteriorate, the number of housing units dropped and the population of the neighborhood began to decline. By the 1970s the population of the district had declined by over 50% in ten years.<sup>viii</sup>

## Recent History

The urban fabric of the north and west sides of the Highland Park district was substantially eroded in the late 1960s. The proposed extension of I-95 through the South End, Roxbury and Jamaica Plain, caused the demolition of breweries and other industrial buildings, as well as houses on both sides of Columbus Avenue, following the historic path of

Stoney Brook. A planned connector road between Martin Luther King Boulevard and the proposed highway resulted in the razing of most of the housing along Vale and Marcella streets.



Photo: Vacant Lot from Highland Avenue

The highway project was halted due to widespread community opposition, but vast areas that had been demolished were vacant for decades, and much remains vacant today. This clearance isolated Roxbury Highlands physically from neighborhoods to the north.

In the last 25 years, the Marcus Garvey Apartments have been constructed, and the Prang Factory has been converted to moderate-income rental housing. Some smaller infill projects have been built, including several Boston Housing Authority owned duplexes. However, scattered throughout the district are numerous vacant parcels both large and small, many created by the cycle of tax foreclosure, decay, and subsequent demolition.



Photo: BHA Housing

In recognition of the rich history of the area, Roxbury State Heritage Park was created in the 1980s to encompass much of Eliot Square, including the First Church. The Park preserved as its headquarters one of the last remaining colonial era structures, the Dillaway – Thomas House.



Drawing of Dillaway-Thomas House, circa 1850

Today's economic and real estate climate creates pressure to redevelop Roxbury Highlands – because of the rich architectural heritage, the substantial amount of vacant land, and the proximity of the neighborhood to downtown, and to large-scale new developments underway.

<sup>i</sup> Anderson and Blackwell, Fort Hill, Roxbury, prepared for the Boston Landmarks Commission, 1972

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Boston Landmarks Commission, *BLC Staff Document: Dudley Planning Report / Roxbury heritage Park*, November 28, 1984

<sup>iv</sup> Warner, Sam Bass, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston*

<sup>v</sup> Boston Landmarks Commission, *BLC Staff Document: Dudley Planning Report / Roxbury heritage Park*, November 28, 1984

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid

<sup>vii</sup> African Americans in Boston: More Than 350 Years

<sup>viii</sup> Roxbury Action Program, *Highland Park 1630-1977*



## 3 – Highland Park's Architectural Heritage

### Styles and Qualities

#### A Range of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Styles

The Roxbury Highlands neighborhood was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989, in recognition of the historic significance of the 630 structures remaining at the time. The neighborhood consists primarily of residential buildings. With the exception the colonial era Dillaway-Thomas House (1750) and the Spooner- Lambert House (1780), the majority of existing structures represents a remarkable cross-section of housing styles typical of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century. Small farmsteads, grand Greek Revival and many other Victorian Revival style buildings characterize the area.

Generally the district's high style, grand houses are located on the upper part of the hill on Cedar, Centre, Highland and Dudley streets as well as Lambert Avenue. Bow and bay-fronted brick row houses built for an upper class clientele formed a strong urban street wall on one side of Marcella, Cedar, Highland, and other streets.

The stylistic and historic variety present in such close proximity results in a unique experience as one walks through the district. Where setbacks are deep and large lots are still preserved the landscape is surprisingly pastoral. Within a block the view may change to an urban streetscape with rowhouses providing a strong, consistent rhythm of bow or bay fronts and repetitive entries tight to the sidewalk.

While most of the original non-residential buildings are located on the streets at the edges of the district, on Centre Street and in Eliot Square, there are several notable exceptions. These include the Italianate style Fellows Athenaeum on Millmont, built in 1872 as a library and now used as a church, and the Gothic / Shingle style St. James African Orthodox Church (1910) at 50 Cedar Street.

Fellows Athenaeum



The architectural styles represented by the commercial and institutional buildings around Eliot Square range from the Federal style First Church, to the Second Empire brick Norfolk house (1870) a large commercial block. The Art Deco style Timilty School is a rare example of a 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural style in the district.

The late -19<sup>th</sup> century architectural styles in Highland Park display Stick Style and Queen Anne elements as well as Colonial Revival details. New construction at the turn of the century in the district consisted primarily of more modest triple-deckers, less ornamented row houses, and other

multiple-family dwellings to accommodate the working-class families moving into the district.

With the exception of a few public or subsidized housing developments, little new residential construction has taken place since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The district's existing architectural character therefore most strongly reflects the range of styles popular at the time of pivotal development in this area between 1820 and the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



First Church Roxbury

### Federal Style

1780 - 1820

#### Summary

The development of the post-revolutionary war Federal style signaled a move away from the earlier Georgian style, which had clear origins in Britain. This first “American” style is characterized by simple, taut forms with delicate carved detail. Earliest residential examples have gable or hipped roofs. The chimney, once a massive central structure, became two smaller chimneys located at the sides of buildings.

This change allowed the creation of a center stair hall, illuminated by doors with sidelights and elliptical fanlights above. Entries were sheltered by a portico supported by paired or grouped columns.

Later ornamentation included carved depictions of garlands, eagles, and other patriotic symbols. Cornice boards also became more elaborate with built-up trim.

Federal architecture is also characteristic of some of the earliest non-residential buildings of the newly independent country, including churches and meeting houses.

#### Characteristic Elements

- Attenuated form, with simple massing
- Gable or hipped roofs
- Occurs in brick and wood frame construction
- Entries porticos with columns
- Doors with sidelights and fanlights.

#### Notable Examples

14 Centre Street (1803)  
Ionic Hall, 149 Roxbury Street (1803)  
First Church Roxbury (1804)



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## Greek Revival 1830 to 1860

### Summary

The popularity of the Greek Revival style was due to public interest in archeological finds from the early democracies of Pompeii, Rome and Athens. The spread of this style coincided with a demand for residential building driven by industrialization. The style adopted the simple building form associated with ancient temples and monuments. A notable change from earlier residential styles is that Greek Revival houses are turned gable-end toward the street, both suggesting a classic temple form and fitting on narrower subdivided lots.

Simple ornamentation consists of abstracted detail based on classic orders: a rhythm of columns or engaged pilasters across the front, an entry framed by wide pilasters, cornice returns, large corner pilasters, wide fascia boards and abstracted entablatures are typical. The restraint of this style lent itself to both large residences and more modest houses. The rise of pattern books available to the public also encouraged the spread of this style.

### Characteristic Elements

- Simple massing
- Windows: 6 over 6 panes or 6 over 9 panes
- Porticos with columns or pilasters
- Usually gable end to street with steeply pitched roofs

### Notable Examples

Edward Everett Hale House,  
12 Morley Street (1848)  
Alvah Kittredge House,  
10 Linwood Street (1836)  
Paige Academy, 38 Highland  
Avenue (ca.1844)  
140 Highland Street (1828)  
45 Thornton Street (1858)



Photo: Hale House, 12 Morely Street







Photo: 54 Cedar Street



Photo: 108 Highland Avenue

### **Carpenter Gothic/ Gothic Revival Style 1840- 1860**

#### **Summary**

Carpenter Gothic or Gothic Revival is a residential style derived from sources popularizing the picturesque British landscape and its vernacular buildings. Multiple steep gables created a rambling profile, and the style was adapted to both large houses and small cottages. The style was well suited to wood frame construction, incorporating delicate ornately carved bargeboards at gable ends, elaborately scrolled brackets, and pointed arch windows.

#### **Characteristic Elements**

- Steeply pitched roofs and exposed gable ends.
- Asymmetric or symmetric massing
- Elaborate decorative wood trim such as jig-sawn barge boards at gable ends, brackets and fascia boards at eaves.

#### **Notable Examples**

54 Cedar Street (1852)  
108 Highland Avenue  
(1848)

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## Italianate

### 1840-1870

#### Summary

Pattern books and the inception of standardized milled lumber for framing and trim helped spread this revival style, one of several eclectic styles evolved in the decades around the Civil War. Throughout the district, Italianate style is visible in freestanding single and double houses as well as attached row houses. The style borrowed elements from medieval Italian architecture including tall square towers or off-center one or two-story projecting angled window bays.

The simplest Italianate houses retain the form of gable end house, with elaborate bracketing at eaves and smaller corner boards. Later, more high-style Italianate examples exhibit roofs shallow enough to appear flat accentuated with deep eaves on all sides.

Italianate architecture differs from earlier styles in the amount of wood detailing, including elaborate scrolled brackets, frieze boards, built-up cornices, paneling and corner quoining. Windows in some of the high style Italianate houses are paired or triple semi-circular or segmented arched windows.

#### Characteristic Elements

- Heavy scrolled brackets at eaves, entry porches and or window hoods
- Windows have 2 over 2 panes. May have round arched windows
- Polygonal (angled) window front of building
- Entry porches or hoods
- Elaborate door and window trim

#### Notable Examples

26-28 Highland Avenue (1859)

34-36 Highland Street (1875)



Photo: Marcella Street House





### Mansard / Second Empire 1850 to 1880

#### Summary

This style reflects the French architecture of Napoleon III, and was considered classic and well-ordered. This architectural style is very similar to Italianate with the addition of mansard roof, which allows a fully usable attic. It is present in various building types - commercial as well as residential buildings, single family homes as well as row houses.

The details are rendered in wood or masonry, and even stone, as in the unique examples of the marble-front row houses facing Cedar Square Park.

Details are straight edged, with heavy lintels or pedimented window heads and particular elaboration at attic windows.

#### Characteristic Elements

- Windows: Large 2 over 2 panes with sharply detailed lintels, often window hoods
- Pedimented attic dormers
- Entry portico
- Polygonal bay at front or side
- Mansard roof

#### Notable Examples

49 Cedar Street (1850)

The Cox Building

at 1 John Eliot Square (1870)



Photo: Milmont Street, two familyhouse



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## Queen Anne 1880 to 1900

### Summary

This romantic revival style is highly ornamented with little classical organization. Like Gothic Revival, it is picturesque. The rise in Queen Anne architecture coincided with the heyday of the Victorian era's mail order catalogs for decorative trims and ornamentation. Shingles and clapboards, were mixed on building exteriors conveying a sense of texture, pattern and complexity.

The style was mostly limited to residential construction, where the idiosyncrasies of rambling asymmetric plans, turrets, bays and wrap around porches created the nooks, crannies and eccentric spaces that made this house style so popular.

### Characteristic Elements

- Asymmetric massing, corner towers
- Windows with stained glass or decorative upper panes, often windows asymmetrically placed in a building façade.
- Ornate lathe-turned woodwork at porches, eave brackets and pediments.
- Decorative shingles often mixed with clapboards

### Notable Examples

15 Dorr Street  
Thwing Street cottages  
48 Thornton Street



Photo: 48 Thornton Street

### Common Forms / Styles with Indigenous Materials

#### Summary

These houses are stylistically varied but unique in their use of indigenous Roxbury Puddingstone, found scattered throughout the hilly Highlands as boulders, outcroppings, and subsurface ledge.

#### Characteristic Elements

- Full height Roxbury Puddingstone walls
- Minimal ornamentation at doors and windows
- Steep gabled roofs

#### Notable Examples

21 Dorr Street (ca. 1838)

34 Lambert Street (ca. 1846)



Photo: 34 Lambert Street

## Common Housing Types

In addition to detached single family houses, the Roxbury Highlands includes a variety of multiple unit dwellings. These include two family houses, triple-deckers, row houses and a few apartment buildings.

These multi-family structures reflect ongoing changes in population density through the mid-to-late 1800s as the Highlands and the surrounding landscape became more urbanized and less rural. The appearance of these new housing types also reflected the lowered economic status of the district's newer residents over time and the rising price of undeveloped land close to Boston.

Double houses and some three-deckers are scattered throughout the district. However, the majority of the more urban housing forms, such as rowhouses were sited along the major streets bordering and running through the district. These buildings represent many of the same architectural styles as single-family home construction, with the exception of Federal and early Greek Revival styles, which pre-date multi-family and rowhouse construction.

### Two family Houses

The massing, siting and details of double houses were designed to make them look like single family houses. Therefore their development continued to preserve the early suburban flavor of the district.

### Characteristic Elements

- Generally side-by-side units with a party wall separating two properties.
- Typically had elaborate landscape and individual walkways to the two units.

### Notable Examples

10 – 12 Millmont  
26 – 28 Highland Avenue



Photo: Row houses on Marcella Street

### Row Houses

Initially replicating the upscale urbane quality of the Boston's Back Bay neighborhood, most of the rowhouses in the district are brick construction. Some are elaborately detailed and several are faced with marble and brownstone.

### Characteristic Elements

- Brick front typical of stylistic details from Italianate / Second Empire
- Bowfront or polygonal window bays, some bays clad with pressed tin were partially inset into the façade.

### Notable Examples

5- 8 Alvah Kittredge Square (1873)  
5-7 Juniper Street (by 1860)  
5 – 17 Highland Park Avenue (by 1877)  
32 – 38 Marcella Street (between 1832 and 1858)

### Three Deckers

Although containing three apartments, some of these structures sought to imitate large freestanding single homes. The architecture of this housing type, characteristic of turn of the century to 1920s construction in Boston's working class neighborhoods was unusually elaborate in Roxbury Highlands, with brackets, dentils, scrollwork and other ornamentation typical of late 19<sup>th</sup> century styles in the neighborhood.

### Characteristic Elements

- Three story bay at front
- Front and rear three story projecting porches.
- Flat roof

### Notable Examples

188 – 202 Highland Street  
41 Dorr Street (1894)



Triple decker in Federal Revival Style





## HIGHLAND PARK



Department of Neighborhood Development  
Research and Development Unit

DATA CREDIT BOSTON WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION



## 4 - Highland Park Today

### Demolition and Development Pressures

#### Who Lives in Highland Park?

Although somewhat dated, a look at the 1990 U.S. Census data for the Roxbury Highlands District provides information which is useful in formulating an approach to preserving the district. In 1990, 3,681 people were living in the district, over a land area of 170 acres, for a density of 21 persons per acre. Approximately 90% percent of the residents were people of color. Nearly 32% of the district's residents in 1990 were children under the age of 18; approximately 7.5 % of the population was 65 years or older.

According to the 1990 census, eighty-one percent of households in Highland Park are made up of families, compared to 71.7% in the city overall. Approximately 73% of all households are black and of these nearly 63% are single-parent headed. Median household income was in the lowest 10 percent of the city. The median income of the neighborhood was 66% of Boston's overall median income. Nearly 30% of households fell below the poverty line, significantly more than Boston's 18.7% overall. The district also had a lower owner-occupancy rate than Boston overall.

#### Land Use and Vacant Lots

For the purpose of this report the boundaries of the Highland Park

District have been drawn to encompass an area slightly larger than the National Register District in order to include much of the vacant land and roadways at the neighborhood's edge. With very few exceptions, the building stock in the district is residential. Non-residential buildings include the First Church of Roxbury, the Fellows Athenaeum (now a church), Timilty and Hale schools, and a few other buildings. In recent years, some residential buildings have been converted to other uses including Paige Academy and Roxbury Action Program. A vacant storefront at the corner of Cedar and Highland has become the home of the Roxbury Science Workshop.

The few commercial spaces within the district tend to be located on the perimeter of the district, including a few convenience stores and a handful of automotive repair and other light industrial uses along Centre Street and at several locations along Washington Street. Bartlett Yards, an MBTA bus repair and storage facility is located at the corner of Washington and Guild Street.

A few small stores are also located in historic John Eliot Square. Other mixed-use buildings or non-residential buildings at John Eliot Square include the 1890s Cox Building and the Dillaway- Thomas House, which serves as the headquarters of the Roxbury Heritage State Park.

Photo: Commercial/Residential at Eliot Square



There are a number of open spaces and parks scattered throughout the district. Among these is Highland Park, the site of the historic Revolutionary War High Fort, with sweeping views of the surrounding landscape. There are also several urban squares, including Cedar Square, Alvah Kittredge Square and several parks with play areas for children such as the Lambert Street Park. Many appear underutilized, perhaps due to deferred maintenance and renovation needs.



Photo: Lambert Street playground

John Eliot Square, once the heart of revolutionary-era Roxbury is also underutilized. It lacks the commercial and social vibrancy typical of village centers in Boston's neighborhoods. While many of



## Highland Park Today

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district's most historic buildings are located here, John Eliot Square is a confusing intersection of several wide streets. Its proximity to the bustling commercial center of Dudley Square probably may explain the lack of local businesses.

The picture of Roxbury Highland's current land use is most starkly painted with an inventory of the vacant land in the district. There are approximately 1000 parcels described within the boundaries of the Highland Park district. Roughly 250 properties are city owned, and nearly all of these are vacant, the buildings demolished or burned. Many privately owned parcels are also vacant, most of which are derelict. Large areas of the district, especially along Washington Street, Marcella Street and New Dudley Street, appear overgrown and abandoned.

### Edges and Boundaries

The current boundaries of the district reflect historic patterns of use and development, but they were also created in part by urban renewal.

Columbus Avenue, the district's western boundary, didn't exist at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the 1960s and 1970s, the breweries and industrial uses located in the Stony Brook valley since the late 1890s were razed, leaving a linear wound in the city's urban fabric on both sides of today's Columbus Avenue. Entries to the neighborhood from Columbus Avenue are severely deteriorated, because there are no buildings other than Roxbury Community College, which backs onto the district.

Prior to urban renewal and the planned I-95 extension, Washington, Roxbury, and New

Dudley streets would have been active spines knitting together the neighborhoods on each side. Today, the east side of the district, along Washington Street is devoid of buildings for blocks. A few buildings and liquor stores remain near Marcella Street. Abandoned retaining walls and stone steps are the sole reminder of the vibrant streetscape which once existed here. The St. Joseph Housing Development and the Shelburne Community Center located across Washington Street do not reflect the historic streetscape, making Washington Street a barrier between the neighborhoods, rather than the urban connector it once was. With these changes, residents have lost access to businesses that had been located along Washington and other boundary streets.



Photo: Vacant corner at Valentine and Washington Streets

With the former edges of the district substantially eroded, the neighborhood appears as something of an island geographically. Dudley Square is the commercial nexus of Roxbury with many businesses, the district court, post office and large social service agencies clustered in the square. While the district is adjacent to Dudley Square, and John Eliot Square is right outside of Dudley, the urban fabric does not reinforce the connection between the district and Dudley Square.

### Cultural Institutions in the District and Surrounding Area

Highland Park is surrounded by late 20<sup>th</sup> century institutions including Roxbury Community College that fronts Columbus Avenue and turns its back to the residential neighborhood. Madison Park High School and The Reggie Lewis Recreation Center are just across New Dudley Street from the district. A mosque is planned for the Highland Park side of New Dudley Street, adjacent to the Roxbury Community College campus, on a long parcel of vacant land.



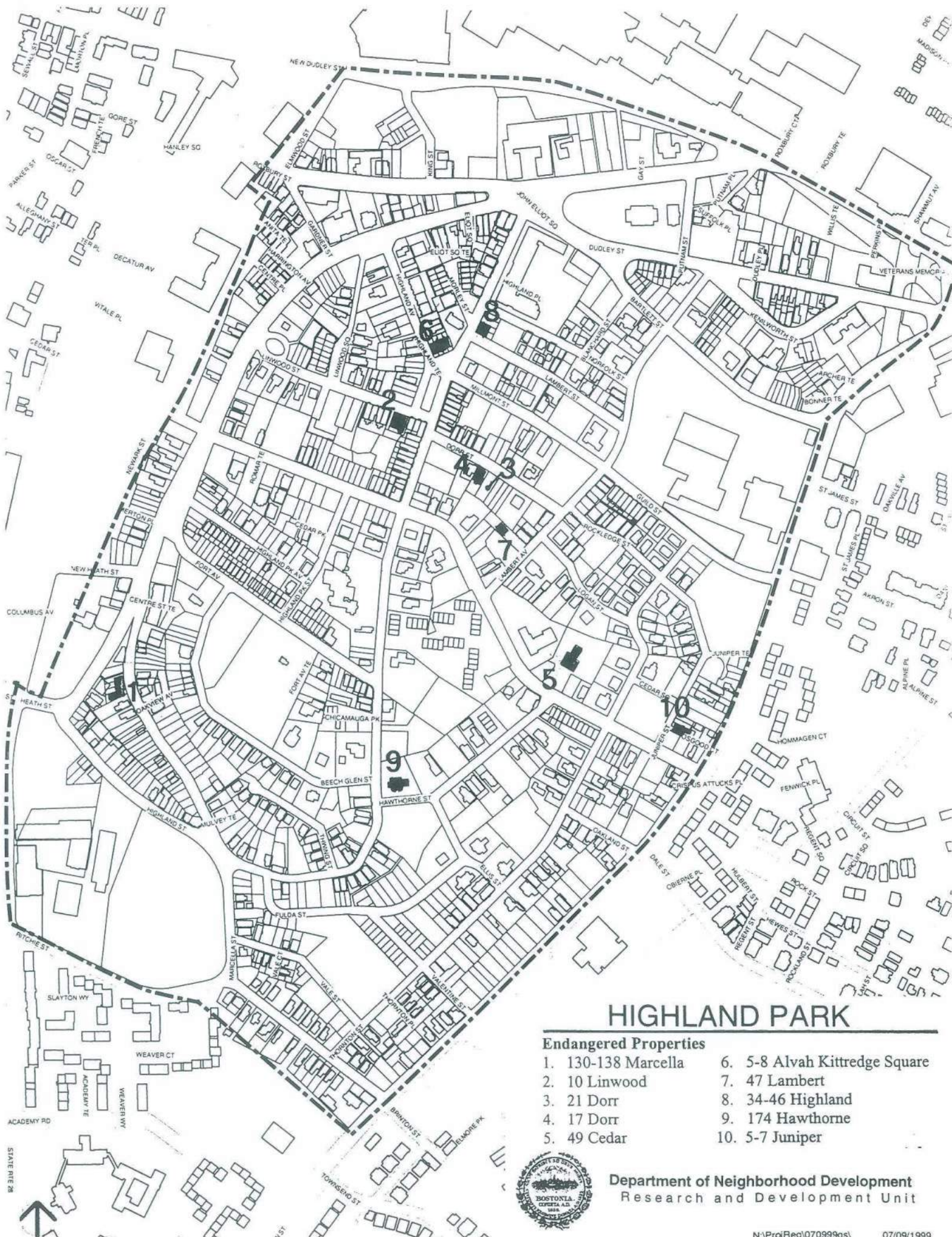
Photo: Corner of New Dudley and Washington

### Endangered Properties and Criteria for Their Selection

Decades of disinvestment and neglect have taken a toll on the Roxbury Highlands neighborhood. In addition to the substantial amount of vacant land due to urban clearance and arson, deferred maintenance and disinvestment have allowed many historic buildings to deteriorate to the point of collapse.

Some homeowners have diligently maintained houses over the years and others have undertaken substantial rehabilitation of historic buildings. Still, too many houses are under-maintained. Some have lost or are at risk of losing their unique





## HIGHLAND PARK

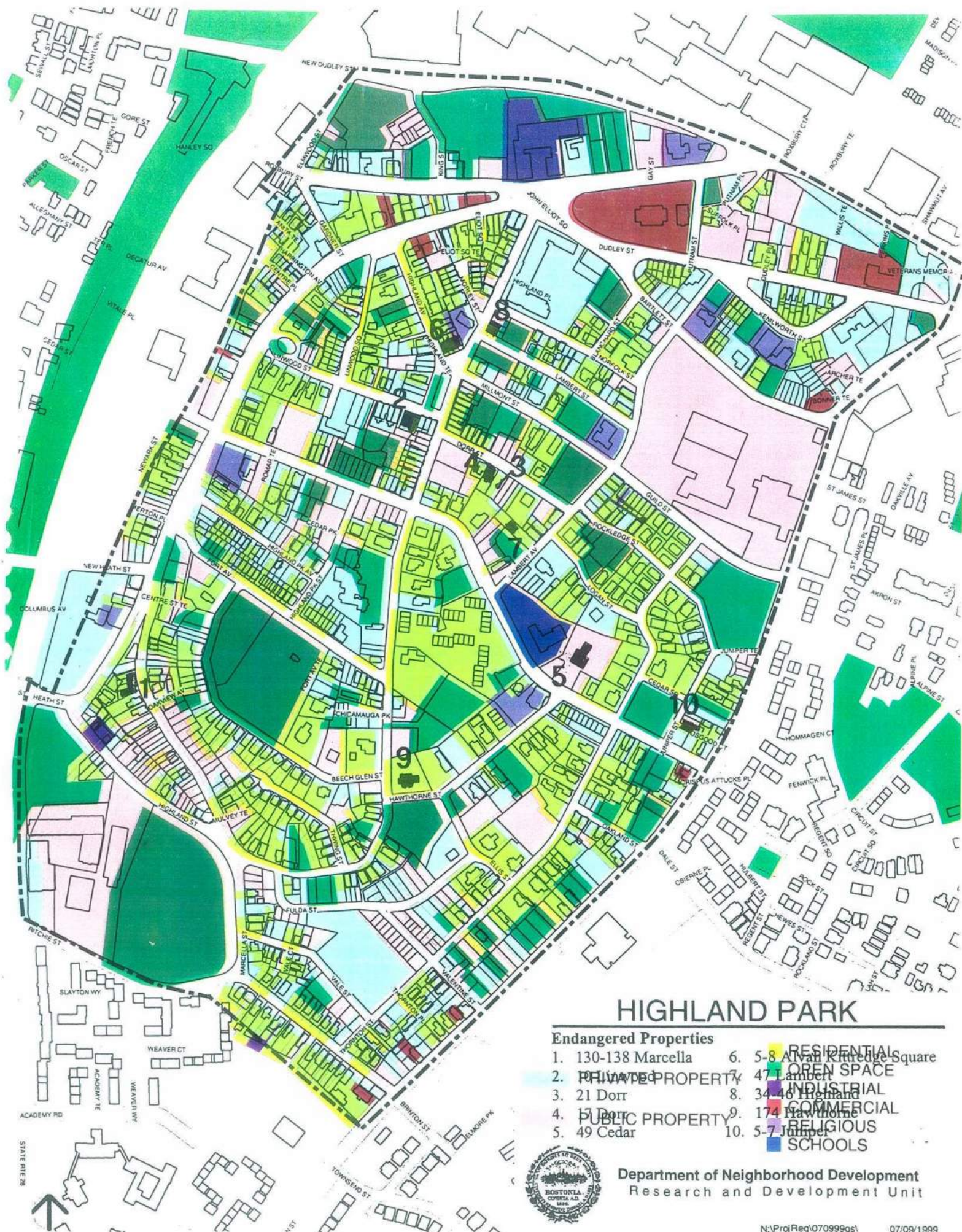
### Endangered Properties

- |                     |                               |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. 130-138 Marcella | 6. 5-8 Alvah Kittredge Square |
| 2. 10 Linwood       | 7. 47 Lambert                 |
| 3. 21 Dorr          | 8. 34-46 Highland             |
| 4. 17 Dorr          | 9. 174 Hawthorne              |
| 5. 49 Cedar         | 10. 5-7 Juniper               |



Department of Neighborhood Development  
Research and Development Unit





# HIGHLAND PARK

### Endangered Properties

- |                     |                               |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. 130-138 Marcella | 6. 5-8 Alvan Kirtledge Square |
| 2. 47 Lambert       | 7. 34-46 Cheam                |
| 3. 21 Dorr          | 8. 174 Belmont                |
| 4. 17 Dorr          | 9. 5-7 Junior                 |
| 5. 49 Cedar         | 10. 5-7 Junior                |



Department of Neighborhood Development  
Research and Development Unit



period detail. Others are abandoned or suffer from severe deterioration and further neglect could lead to their demolition. A substantial number of properties are publicly owned; some due to tax foreclosure, others as a result of planned urban renewal projects since abandoned.

In the past decades, scores of buildings have been demolished as a result of deterioration past the point of feasible rehabilitation. Building demolition represents an ongoing and substantial threat to preservation of Highland Park's historic character.

Therefore, as part of the preparation of this report, ten properties have been selected according to established criteria, as the ten most endangered buildings in the district. There are certainly other additional buildings that could be put on the list. However, due to constraints of time and budget, only those ten considered most threatened due to physical deterioration and historical significance, have been selected. The selection criteria are included in Appendix B.

Several goals originally guided the formation of the selection criteria. One objective was to include a cross-section of the various house types and styles typical of Highland Park's historic development. Another aimed to have a broad geographic distribution of the sites throughout the district. However, there are areas and streets that are largely stable and therefore no "endangered properties" exist. There also are streets such as Dorr and Marcella, which have multiple endangered properties and much vacant land. The purpose of the Ten Most Endangered Properties List is to focus efforts on preserving these buildings as a catalyst to protect and enhance the entire district.

## List of Endangered Properties



**Identity and Address:**  
130-138 Marcella Street (includes vacant lot)  
**Building Type:**  
Second Empire brick rowhouse



**Identity and Address:**  
5-8 Alva Kittredge Square  
cross street Highland & Millmont  
**Building Type:**  
Masonry rowhouse



**Identity and Address:**  
RAP Building (Alva Kittredge House)  
10 Linwood Street  
**Building Type:**  
Greek Revival wood frame estate



**Identity and Address:**  
17 Dorr Street  
**Building Type:**  
Triple Decker



**Identity and Address:**  
21 Dorr Street – Puddingstone house  
**Building Type:**



Single Family circa 1830s

**Identity and Address:**  
34-36 Highland  
**Building Type:**  
Mansard roof double house

**Identity and Address:**





**Identity and Address:**  
67 Lambert Street, visible from Cedar  
**Building Type:**  
Gambrel-roofed single family



**Identity and Address:**  
174 Highland Street, corner of Hawthorne Street (David Hodgdon House)  
**Building Type:**  
Second Empire single family



**Identity and Address:**  
49 Cedar Street, next to Hale School  
**Building Type:**  
Second Empire single family



**Identity and Address:**  
5-7 Juniper Street on Cedar Park Square  
**Building Type:**  
Brick bow front rowhouses with mansard addition at rear

### Recent Development Activities

Much recent private development has been the construction of single-family houses on lots formerly occupied by two- or three-family houses or rowhouses. Because these new homes tend to be adjacent to existing historic and often much larger structures, they provide a clear, and often awkward, comparison of new and old.

### Massing, Materials and Details

These new homes do not relate to the size of the earlier buildings. Older two-family houses comprised approximately 2200 SF on two floors usually with porches on the front and back and often a developed attic with dormers. The vertical mass of three-family houses is even greater. Given the current cost of materials and labor, new construction seldom reaches the level of architectural detail and finishes evident in 19<sup>th</sup> century

buildings. The contrast is stark, and particularly unsympathetic to the historic character of the Highland Park District. Some of the larger private vacant lots are potential development sites for multi-family housing. Developers in the area frequently propose construction of pre-fabricated units, to reduce construction cost. Typically, in such projects, the historic aspects of building mass and scale are ignored. And architectural detailing is minimal because it is costly.

Photo: Fort Hill Trust Rental Apartments

### Recent Neighborhood Efforts

The most active neighborhood group currently involved with planning for the future of Roxbury Highlands is the Roxbury Highlands Neighborhood Council's Project Review Committee (PRC), an elected body of Highland Park residents. This committee was established to respond to the efforts of the Department of



Nighborhood Development to select several city-owned parcels for new residential development. The PRC, which is focused on five geographic sub-districts within the neighborhood, has considered issues of density, lot-size, housing type, and open space.

Roxbury Highlands lacks an active Community Development Corporation; thus many of the federal programs funded through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) are not easily implemented in this neighborhood.

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Until the 1980s, the Roxbury Action Program, which bought and occupied the Alva Kittredge House, acted as a CDC, developing housing units in the district. However, RAP has not recently developed any new units, and the Alva Kittredge House, an architectural focal point of the neighborhood is abandoned.

A number of other community groups and non-profit institutions have been, and continue to be, active in the neighborhood, including groups providing child care, youth programs, private education, gardening programs for seniors and children, and substance abuse programs. Other local neighborhood organizations are active in basic quality of life issues in the neighborhood. These organizations form a strong basis for current and future efforts to improve and preserve this historic neighborhood.



Seal of the city of Roxbury

## 5 - Public Programs Available to Highland Park

### Rehabilitation and New Construction

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There are a range of city programs that can be used by individuals, developers, business and, non-profit organizations to enhance the Highland Park neighborhood. This chapter focuses on programs that target the renovation, rehabilitation and new construction of housing, as well as those programs aimed at maintaining tax foreclosed properties, both buildings and vacant land, while they are under city control. Also included is an analysis of city programs available to encourage business development or new services within the district.

### Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) Programs - Real Estate Division

#### Real Estate Development Initiative (REDI)

REDI has a variety of programs to manage and dispose of property acquired due to tax foreclosures, as well as buildings no longer used by public agencies. Each program has a process of advertising and developer selection or sales.

- **The Clearinghouse**

617-635-4191

This program provides interested parties with information on tax-foreclosed and surplus properties.

The Clearinghouse provides notification of advertised properties to interested parties and provides information on the DND disposition programs and how to access them. A site-finder for individuals and non-profits seeking to locate / purchase / or license a city-owned property is also a feature of the Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse issues licenses for temporary use of City of Boston property.

- **REDI Building Sales**

617-635-0465

The building sales program sells property to private buyers who agree to rehabilitate the buildings for residential, commercial and institutional uses. Properties are sold through a Request for Proposals process addressing a list of project criteria which vary by proposal, or by public auction.

- **REDI Land Sales**

617-635-0567

This program sells land through an RFP process and establishes criteria for each lot of land sold by the city.

- **Boston Home Sites**

617-635-0567

This program is designed to stimulate development of new privately financed single and two-family homes on city-owned land. The program offers 5,000 to 10,000 square foot buildable lots zoned for residential use. The design of proposed construction must adhere to the surrounding

neighborhood. DND releases a request for proposals from interested parties which includes design guidelines.

- **Yard Sales**

617-635-0567

City owned parcels up to 5,000 SF can be sold to abutters, with a deed restricted to open space use only. Subsequent sale of these parcels can only be made as part of the applicant's abutting property.

### Property Management

The DND has four programs that oversee the maintenance of property that has come into city ownership:

- **Land Management**

617-635-0378

Land Management cleans vacant land pending disposition. It also attempts to transform properties with no redevelopment plan into a temporary community asset with grass and fencing.

- **Building Management**

617-635-0102

This program addresses safety issues for newly acquired city properties. It provides emergency repairs for occupied buildings or portions of buildings, and boards up vacant buildings to prevent illegal entry.

- **Demolition**

617-635-0102



## Public Programs Available to Highland Park

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This program demolishes city-owned tax foreclosed properties which are unsafe and where it is not economically feasible to rehabilitate them. Unsafe private buildings are also demolished as directed by the Inspectional Services Department.

### ▪ **Project Pride**

617-635-0102

The Project Pride program attempts to combat illegal drug use on both city and privately owned properties usually in designated drug control areas, by boarding up buildings and fencing and cleaning vacant lots.

## DND/Homeowner Services for Renovation and Rehabilitation

### HomeWorks Programs

#### ▪ **HomeWorks**

617-635-0492

Aimed at facilitating affordable home improvements by homeowners, Homeworks provides grants of 1/3 the cost of almost any improvement, interior or exterior, up to \$3,000 or \$4,000 if exterior painting is undertaken. This program also offers discount loans.

Income limits:

1 person	\$45,000
2 + person	\$65,000

Residency: Owner-Occupant of 1-4 family house or condo for 5 years

#### ▪ **HomeWorks Plus**

617-635-0565

Provide discount loans up to \$5,000 with owner matching the amount; available for exterior repair and improvement for properties that have a visible

neighborhood impact. These loans carry a 3% rate and a 3-year term.

Income limits:

1 person	\$55,000
2 + person	\$85,000

Residency: Owner-Occupant of 1-4 family house for 3 years.

#### ▪ **Boston Historic HomeWorks**

617-635-0492

Program specifically designed to cover repairs that maintain the historic integrity of 1-5 unit houses that are at least 50 years old. It provides matching grants of up to \$7,500; available for exterior repair and improvement projects that affect the architectural integrity of a property and which have visible impact on neighborhood character.

Income Limits:

1 person	\$55,000
2 + person	\$85,000

Residency: Owner occupied 1-5 Family home for 7 years

#### ▪ **House Boston**

617-635-0369

The House Boston program offers eligible buyers the opportunity to purchase and rehabilitate a “fixer-upper” 1-4 unit home or condominium in Boston utilizing PRO (Purchase/Rehabilitation Option) mortgages and grants. PRO mortgages are available from local lenders as well as some non-profit agencies. Grants of up to \$5,000 to match 50% of rehabilitation costs.

Selected Income Limits include:

1 person	\$50,400
Up to 6 person	\$83,500

### Senior Homeowner Assistance Programs

617-635-0338

The DND has three programs available to seniors who own and occupy their own 1-4 family home:

#### ▪ **Senior Homeowner Minor Repair Program**

This program provides labor and materials with a small fee for income-eligible seniors. It covers repairs to broken windows, minor plumbing, etc.

#### ▪ **Senior Emergency Home Repair Program**

Repairs of conditions that pose an immediate threat to the health and safety of elderly homeowners, such as leaking roofs, hazardous porches and steps and failed heating systems are made through this program.

#### ▪ **Senior Home Rehabilitation Program**

Moderate to more extensive repairs are covered by this program that provides deferred loans and technical assistance. This program provides a loan of up to \$35,000 for a 4-family house.

#### ▪ **Lead Safe Boston**

617-635-0190

This DND program provides grant monies, low interest loans, lead screenings and technical assistance to de-lead properties where children under six years of age reside. The need for lead abatement is important in neighborhoods with older buildings such as Highland Park.

Selected Eligibility requirements include:

- Owner-occupants of 1-4 family homes where gross income is 80% below median.
- Investor owned 1-4 family property with

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income eligible tenants.

- **Home Buying Assistance Program**

617-635-4663

This program provides information and education to first time homebuyers in Boston. Graduates of homebuyer education classes may be eligible for City of Boston Grants for closing cost and/or downpayment grants.

## **DND Housing Development Programs**

Two DND programs provide loans to for- and non-profit developers to create affordable first-time home ownership opportunities. A third program provides financing for rental projects.

- **Home Again**

617-635-0353

At least \$3 million in linkage funds from the City of Boston and the Neighborhood Housing Trust have been pledged to create up to 150 new homes throughout Boston on 10 sites owned by BRA and DND. There are several parcels in Highland Park suitable for this program, which is applicable to three types of housing developments: affordable housing, market rate housing and mixed income developments.

The projects will be awarded through an RFP process that includes significant community input. Subsidy in the form of low interest loans will be available to non-profit or for-profit developers of affordable housing opportunities.

- **Homeownership**

617-635-0362

Funds available through this program are disbursed through a

competitive funding round in conjunction with the state.

Low interest loans are available to non-profit and for-profit developers of affordable homeownership opportunities. Loans may be used for new construction or renovation.

- **DND Rental Development Program**

617-635-0362

This program provides loans to non-profit and for-profit developers to create or renovate low to moderate-income rental and co-op units for families. It focuses on providing multi-family housing and elderly housing.

## **Non Residential Construction Funds**

### **DND/Office of Business Development**

The Office of Business Development guides the city of Boston's economic development agenda in neighborhoods by offering or facilitating technical assistance, design services and marketing and capital assistance. This office also provides information on a number of business development programs both for non-profit and for-profit developers including:

- **Community Challenge Grants**

617-635-0328

Matching grants available to community-based groups working to improve the quality of Boston's neighborhoods.

- **Partners With Non-Profits**

617-635-0328

This program provides matching grants of up to \$25,000 available

to non-profit organizations running residential, childcare, senior and other social service organizations. This program has been focused on emergency repair needs.

- **Grassroots**

617-635-0203

Funds through this program have been available for the development of community gardens and other non-profit owned space, primarily in support of DND-funded housing activity.

- **Boston Main Streets**

617-635-2000

City of Boston and private organizations, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation, provide matching funds to revitalize historic community business centers. While this program has been demonstrated as effective, its geographic and functional requirements do not match the predominantly residential character of most of Highland Park, and may only be useful for properties at the edges of the district.

- **Development Financing**

617-635-0115

The goals of this program are to create new low and moderate-income jobs; provide services to a neighborhood; remove blight from a neighborhood. Financing through this office requires 15% equity and loans must be secured.

- **The Boston Empowerment Center**

This center provides technical assistance and information for business development by staff from the DND, BRA, and Small Business Association.



## Public Programs Available to Highland Park

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### Boston Redevelopment Authority

#### ▪ Land Development

In general the BRA tends to have parcels which are more suitable in size and scale for commercial development or larger scale residential development than are typical in the Highlands District. Several large parcels about the district and are the subject of early BRA planning and review.

Within the district, the BRA block of 7 parcels located on Marcella Street is most likely a remnant of the city land acquisition in anticipation of extending Martin Luther King Boulevard to the planned I-95 extension in the early 1970s. There are several other smaller individual parcels currently owned by the BRA scattered throughout Highland Park.

### Programs for Commercial Development

#### ▪ U.S. HUD Section 108/ EDI Program

This program targets high impact projects in Boston neighborhoods designated as Enhanced Enterprise Communities, with job creation and neighborhood stabilization as key goals. The program consists of grant monies (for project soft costs), HUD loans (for real estate acquisition and rehabilitation) and requires equity or private financing.

### DND and BRA Programs In Highland Park

Current homeowners in Highland Park could use many of the Department of Neighborhood Development Programs. Given the income level of many of the district's residents, the programs'

eligibility criteria are applicable to Highland Park. Of particular use are those programs designated for rehabilitation and maintenance by senior homeowners and for historic properties. In addition, the first-time and income eligible homeowner purchase programs might provide assistance to individuals considering buying a home in the district.

While funds available from most of the subsidized home maintenance programs are useful for homes with modest repair requirements, the deteriorated condition of many of the historic properties in Highland Park requires substantial renovation. These repair costs far exceed the maximum loan and grant amounts currently offered.

An obstacle to the effectiveness of both existing city homeowner programs and those targeted for new housing or small-scale commercial development may be the lack of a neighborhood clearinghouse for information and technical assistance. In the absence of a community development corporation (CDC), covering this geographic area, for example, homeowners may not even be aware of applicable programs, or where to receive assistance in applying. Certainly one function of a local CDC would be to publicize particular programs successfully applied within Highland Park.

There is so much city-owned property in Highland Park, that information about programs concerned with maintenance of public property, disposition of sideyards, and even new development, should be easily available. Although there is much less commercial land use than residential in Highland Park, there are a few vacant corner storefronts

scattered throughout the neighborhood. A local clearinghouse might distribute information on appropriate city programs for small neighborhood businesses and social service agencies directly serving the local community.

## 6 - Preservation Strategies for Highland Park

### Actions and Recommendations

An initial range of preservation strategies for Highland Park is reviewed in this chapter. Some, such as identifying endangered properties, have been covered in other chapters. Others, such as providing information on public preservation programs, are presented below.

- ❑ **Review existing local, state and federal preservation programs and building regulations** to assess their effectiveness in the Highland Park context
- ❑ **Determine actions and programs available** to individuals and public agencies which can be used to enhance the historic character of the neighborhood
- ❑ **Identify significant threatened properties** in immediate danger of demolition to avoid further architectural loss in Highland Park
- ❑ **Propose an Architectural Conservation District** that offers specific protection of the historic character of this neighborhood in the face of development pressures. Through design guidelines, adaptive reuse, alterations and new construction projects in Highland Park can be reviewed for historic compatibility

### Existing Preservation Programs

#### ■ **Federal Preservation Act – National Register**

The National Register of Historic Places is a federal list administered by the Secretary of the Interior. Although an honorary designation, a property's inclusion indicates the significance of a building, site or district in the nation's history, culture and architecture. The Highland Park District is listed on the National Register.

#### ■ **Section 106**

Section 106 of the Federal Preservation Act stipulates that properties on the National Register will trigger review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission if proposed projects utilize federal funds, permits, licenses or entitlements. Thus, projects undertaken solely with private funds are not subject to review or regulation by the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

#### ■ **Massachusetts Chapter 254**

Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 254 is similar to Federal Section 106. It stipulates that a property already on the State Register of Historic Places will trigger a review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the Boston Landmarks Commission, if a proposed project uses state funds, requires a state license or a state permit. Listing on or eligibility for

the National Register results in concurrent listing on the State Register of Historic Places.

#### ■ **Federal Investment Tax Credit**

Owners of income producing properties listed on the Register, including rental units, may qualify for an Investment Tax Credit if they undertake a certified rehabilitation of their property. By adhering to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, owners can receive a 20% federal income tax credit for the substantial rehabilitation exceeding \$5,000 or the adjusted basis of the building.

While there are no accompanying restrictions on the actions of private property owners who utilize private funding, there is also no federal income tax credit currently available in Boston to single family homeowners.



Photo: Morley Street

#### ■ **Survey and Planning Grants and MPPF Funding**

The Massachusetts Historical Commission, the state agency responsible for the administration of the Federal Preservation Act,



## Preservation Strategies for Highland Park

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oversees several other programs of interest to the Highland Park neighborhood. Survey and Planning Grants, funded through a disbursement of federal funds, are available to assist in integrating preservation objectives into local planning. This report, undertaken for the Boston Landmarks Commission to address the need for the preservation of Highland Park, is partially funded by a planning grant from the MHC.

The Massachusetts Preservation Project Fund (MPPF), administered by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, has provided matching funds for renovation projects to non-profit or municipal owners of buildings on the National Register and the State Register. These projects must also follow historic renovation standards as outlined by the Secretary of the Interior. Two Highland Park projects currently receiving MPPF funding individually are the renovation of Paige Academy and repairs at St. John / St. James Episcopal Church.

### ■ Public Education

The Boston Landmarks Commission is Boston's preservation agency and is a local resource for information on both preservation and the history of many of Boston's neighborhoods. Information about specific properties in Highland Park has been collected by the Landmarks Commission and is available on Inventory forms which summarize the social and architectural history of individual properties.

### ■ Preservation Programs and Their Effectiveness in Preserving Highland Park

National Register status and Section 106 and Chapter 254 are useful in

a limited way in Highland Park. Efforts to redevelop buildings in public ownership or private buildings eligible for money from public agencies such as the Department of Neighborhood Development will trigger review for historic compliance. Other publicly funded projects such as road projects or community college projects might also trigger review.

However, for the privately owned single or multi-family dwellings that comprise many of buildings in Highland Park, the National Register listing is primarily symbolic. Beyond advice given about historic rehabilitation and preservation practices, there is no preservation enforcement method for renovations or additions to these buildings. In order to avoid the constraints of preservation standards, a proponent of a project eligible for the 20% tax credit may opt to forfeit that eligibility and use less restrictive private financing.

## Existing Zoning Regulations

The guidelines contained in the Boston Zoning Code adopted by the Boston Zoning Commission are particularly significant given the amount of vacant land available for new construction in the district and the potential for redevelopment of existing under-utilized buildings.

### ■ Zoning Requirements

Following is an overview of the current Boston Zoning Code regulations applicable in the Highland Park District, Volume 3, Article 50, dated 12/31/97. These guidelines provide a framework for the type, size and location of both new development and additions and alterations to existing structures. The zoning code

establishes triggers for public design review process and outlines the items to be reviewed and who will participate in the process.

### Predominant Zoning Classification

The underlying zoning, unless a specific different sub-district is designated, is 3F-4000.

#### 3F – 4000 SF

Two dwelling units are allowed on a 4000 SF lot with an additional 2000 SF required for one more unit (3-family)

<u>Setbacks</u>	Front yard	20'
	Side yard	10'
	Rear yard	30'

### Residential Parking Requirement

1 space per unit

### Zoning Sub-districts

In addition to the 3-F zoning, the following sub-districts are scattered throughout the neighborhood:

RH	row house
OC – G	garden
OC – UW	urban wilds
OC – RC	recreation open space
OC – P	park
MFR–LS	multi-family / local services

CF –U cultural facilities

Dudley EDA- Dudley Square  
Economic Development Area.

The northeast corner of the district, between Dudley and Bartlett street and encompassing Archer Terrace and Bonner Terrace, lies in the Dudley EDA. Zoning here is allows denser commercial building types with heights up to 55'.

### Dimensional Exceptions

There are several exceptions to minimum dimensional requirements that allow new construction to conform more closely to the existing context. For example, section 50.44.1 allows the new building setback to match those of at least two consistent existing buildings on a block. Section 50.44.2 permits a 3/4 minimum lot size providing that other minimum specific dimensions are met.

#### Boulevard Planning District

The eastern edge of the district is bounded by the Washington Boulevard Planning District, which extends 100' from centerline of Washington Street and is superimposed on sub-district zoning. This overlay requires that certain design components are included and design review is conducted with acknowledgement of Washington Street's significance.

#### Neighborhood Design Overlay District (NDOD)

The entire Highland Park/ Eliot Square District is designated a Neighborhood Design Overlay District, established as an overlay to protect the historic character of the neighborhood). Typically, the Zoning Code specifies small project design review when adding a minimum of 20,000 square feet or a minimum of 15 dwellings (Article 80, Small Project Review). However, in a Neighborhood Design Overlay District such as Highland Park, *any alteration*-changing a roof or height of cornice line, erecting an addition of 300 square feet or greater, and any exterior façade alteration over 300 square feet should trigger a design review.

#### Demolition Delay – Article 85

One additional local legislative tool is available for the specific objective of preservation. Article

85 of the Boston Zoning Code establishes up to a 90-day delay in the granting of permission to demolish a building if it is at least 50 years old. If the Boston Landmarks Commission makes a “determination of significance” on a building, demolition delay provides a specific period for public comment and an opportunity to determine whether an alternative to demolishing the building can be found. One goal of the Demo-Delay article is to minimize the demolition of buildings where no immediate re-use of the site is planned.

Article 85 is applicable to properties that are neither individual Boston Landmarks nor in a local historic district. However, it cannot prevent demolition, only defer it for 90 days.

Photo: Cedar Park double house, before half



was demolished

### **Impact of Existing Zoning on Historic Preservation**

In assessing zoning as a preservation tool, we addressed the following questions: Does current zoning protect and preserve the existing neighborhood character by encouraging historically sensitive new construction? Do the dimensional requirements reflect historic patterns, scale, building density and type of land use? Does the review process allow for timely assessment of development and renovation proposals in this

historic district by appropriate stakeholders?

#### ■ **Highland Park and the Predominant 3F- 4000 Zoning**

It appears that the zoning, at 3F-4000, is incompatible with the historic character of this 19<sup>th</sup>-century neighborhood for a few divergent reasons. First, in many parts of Highland Park, existing vacant lots are substantially less than 4000 square feet and are not buildable as-of-right unless combined resulting in a project of visibly lower density than the adjacent context. For example, along the south end of Highland Street, there is a strong streetscape created by a pattern of tall and closely spaced triple-decker houses on lots appearing to average between 2000 and 2500 SF. New development on a number of adjacent vacant lots in this area of Highland Street would result in a more horizontal building form relative to the street, significantly changing the existing character of streetscape.

Photo: Triple decker streetscape along



Highland Street

Conversely, existing lot lines at the interior of the district, especially on the hill, indicate that this core section was never densely built. Historic maps of the neighborhood reveal the persistence of several “suburban” or even “rural” pockets within the district. Parts of these historic streetscapes remain scattered throughout the district



## Preservation Strategies for Highland Park

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particularly on Cedar, Hawthorne and Highland Streets. In these areas, the density allowed by 3F-4000 designation seems high from the viewpoint of preserving the historic architectural character of the district.

Finally, the 3F-4000 designation precludes small commercial development. Historically, not only would the district have been seamlessly connected to the surrounding urban fabric, but small ground floor commercial and service establishments would have existed on some street corners. The district's continuity with surrounding urban fabric was broken by demolition for the planned I-95 extension, urban renewal, public housing developments, and neglect. The lack of new as-of-right locations for small commercial services within the district seems to fall short of current urban planning theory indicating that small commercial districts are basic to people's quality of life in an urban neighborhood.

### ▪ Zoning and the Historic Streetscape

One element of the historic streetscapes in Highland Park is the wide variation in building setbacks. For new construction on infill lots, current Zoning Code allows a project to match the surrounding buildings. However, on streets with larger vacant areas and little remaining context, such as Valentine or Thornton streets, a setback of 20' is required for new construction by the 3-F 4000 designation. A preservation approach to setbacks and streetscapes on these larger developable sites acknowledges the variety in this neighborhood and provides flexibility in building setback dimensions.

### ▪ Zoning Designations and Redevelopment

The location and designation of current zoning sub-districts within Highland Park seem to reflect what existed at the time of the last zoning review or, in the absence of buildings, what is suggested by the pattern of lot lines. For example, some vacant lots formerly occupied by rowhouses are still designated as rowhouse sub-districts. Several community gardens begun on vacant lots once occupied by rowhouses, have been designated as open space.

While it is important to consider historic lot lines in planning future development, it is not necessarily in the best interests of the district's residents, nor good urban planning practice, to adhere strictly to these patterns. Some of the historic density patterns reflect speculative subdivision by 19<sup>th</sup> century property owners, rather than any thoughtful urban planning. Since large areas of land within the district are vacant, particularly at the edges, future development of the larger parcels should consider both 19<sup>th</sup> century land use patterns and the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century urban community. One of the most important elements of the historic land use pattern that should be maintained is the variety of density within the district, from rowhouse to pastoral settings.



Photo: Cottage on Dorr Street

### Housing

The variety in the district's historic housing densities can guide new development. There appears to be enough vacant land owned by the city, that changing as-of-right development allowances on a number of these parcels could have a significant impact on the neighborhood's approach to new development. For example, particular blocks or streets could be re-designated for lower density by increasing the minimum lot size. Some lower density residential zoning sub-districts are:

3F - 7,000 which requires up to 10,000 SF for 3 family  
2F - which requires 5,000 SF for duplexes

Carefully selecting these pockets within the district would encourage new development that recreates some of the character that was present prior to the 1940s. Limited use of such down-zoning might also encourage new middle income residences. It is also important to allow multi-family uses such as co-ops or condominiums in some of the large existing single-family houses to offset the cost of their upkeep and to preserve some economical development options. Such an approach, while requiring a zoning variance under the current regulations, would accommodate a variety of households in different types of units, encouraging

economic diversity and maintaining the rich physical landscape of the historic district.

#### Open Space

Some of the publicly held, residentially zoned parcels should be committed to open space. This would serve to protect from development some of the open space currently enjoyed by the neighborhood and buffer abutters from potential development. If done in areas that were never as densely developed as other parts of the district, such as the area around Thornton and Highland Ave, this might reinforce the landscape diversity this neighborhood represented.

The Thornton and Ellis Streets area as defined by the Highland Park Project Review Committee has the least amount of in-use open space. In this area parcels could be designated as open space to guide the pattern of future development. Some smaller scale open space might also be designated in the Fort Hill area, in anticipation of infill in

this historically denser portion of Highland Park.

#### Retail

The existing Multifamily Residential (MFR) designation in some spots provides conditional approval of retail and restaurant uses, as does MFR/ Light Services (LS), the sub-district designation for the Washington Street edge. However, the predominant 3F-4000 zoning prevents even conditional location of retail uses in a district already lacking the conveniences of other urban neighborhoods.

A different approach to zoning could encourage redevelopment that serves the community, is compatible with the historic urban pattern, and allows for local walk-to retail districts to accommodate corner stores, bakeries, cafes and other urban amenities.

Appropriate locations for such retail uses would include Alvah Kittredge Square, John Eliot Square, and perhaps the area of Centre Street close to Eliot Square, which already has several commercial properties.

#### ▪ **The Zoning Code and Design Review**

Several limitations are apparent in the effectiveness of design review zoning as a preservation tool. First the design review is triggered by Boston Inspectional Services (ISD), and is the responsibility of the BRA, as part of the zoning review and variance process. Projects not requiring a variance, may not receive design review.

Secondly, although zoning states that “exterior wall articulation, fenestration and other architectural features” are subject to design review for historic compatibility,

the general requirements described in Section 50-39 are not specifically preservation oriented.

There is growing concern among neighborhood residents that the Boston Landmarks Commission is not included in the review process since Highland Park is not designated as a local historic district by the City of Boston. Creation of an Architectural Conservation District under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975 (as amended) would put administration under the Boston Landmarks Commission, with members from the neighborhood.

### **Preservation of Endangered Properties**

Among the preservation strategies with the most tangible results would be to salvage and rehabilitate the endangered properties in the neighborhood. As identified in Chapter 4, at least ten properties are most at risk of being lost. Since these particular buildings are high profile, prominent or important anchors on a block, the effects of rehabilitating them will be pronounced, perhaps even starting a ripple effect of local improvements.

A number of approaches could be considered to rehab these properties.

- Seek public funds for public or non-profit owned properties such as:
  - MPPF funds
  - DND's Partners with Non-Profits
- Qualifying homeowners should use such public programs as:
  - Historic Homeworks
  - Senior Homeowners Assistance Programs
- Work with other non-profit preservation partners such as Historic Boston



## Preservation Strategies for Highland Park

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- Seek public ownership of abandoned properties
- Form a local non-profit Community Development Corporation to take on a redevelopment role, and serve as a information clearinghouse available programs

### Neighborhood Action to Preserve a Livable Environment

In addition to its rich stock of residential buildings, Highland Park is endowed with a number of other physical and social attributes that if augmented would reinforce historic preservation objectives. The following is primarily a descriptive inventory of these attributes with recommendations to strengthen them.

#### Parks and Open Space

- The city should maintain public vacant properties and consider turning parcels over to an appropriate public agency or other entity whose purpose is open development and management
- Public park space should be maintained
- Selected vacant lots could be transferred to groups to provide comprehensive oversight of open space
- Neighborhood groups could seek public funds such as Grassroots and Community Challenge grants to implement open space improvement and activity programs

#### District Gateways and Boundaries

- Define a sense of entry to the district using public or private landscape or improvement programs

- Encourage redevelopment along the edges of the district that is integrated with the district, physically and functionally, and which serves the district's residents

#### Sidewalks and Pathways

- Public walkways should be well-maintained and illuminated
- Seek public funds such as Grassroots and Community Challenge grants to implement open space improvements and activity programs

#### Institutional Presence

- Form a local Community Development Corporation as a clearinghouse for neighborhood action
- Establish links between the Highland Park neighborhood and surrounding cultural institutions

### Proposal to Establish the Highland Park Architectural Conservation District

The State enabling legislation allows the creation of a local Architectural Conservation District. Designation as an Architectural Conservation District can promote neighborhood pride and raise awareness of the historic character of a neighborhood. Particularly important in a neighborhood such as Highland Park, is that it would help stem the demolitions and retain as much original architecture as possible. Three other Architectural Conservation Districts have been established in Boston – Bay State Road / Back Bay

West, St. Botolph Area and Mission Hill Triangle.

Twenty years ago neighborhood residents sought a local historic district designation to preserve Highland Park by petitioning the BLC. The time seems right to re-examine this option as a preservation tool.

The process of receiving local Architectural Conservation District Designation involves the Boston Landmarks Commission, the Mayor's Office, the City Council, and active public participation. Among the most important tools accompanying local District designation are design guidelines, specifically tailored to the neighborhood. Guidelines can be established with significant public input and critique to shape new construction, and targeted to impact various scales of renovation and rehabilitation. The presence of design guidelines and the need to obtain preservation commission review and approval in order to obtain a building permit will give both Highland Park residents and the BLC, the city's historic preservation agency, the ability preserve and enhance this historic neighborhood.

## 7 – Preliminary Design Guidelines

### A Proposed Architectural Conservation District for Highland Park

#### Need for An Architectural Conservation District

There is sustained and mounting concern among many residents of Highland Park to preserve the unique physical and historically significant character of the neighborhood and to ensure that future development does not erode or destroy the quality of the district's physical environment. In the process of reviewing the options available for a preservation plan for Highland Park, several meetings were held with the Project Review Committee (PRC) of the Roxbury Neighborhood Council. It became clear that without legislation establishing a process for historic preservation design review, Highland Park's unique architectural character could be further eroded.

The PRC therefore voted to bring to the neighborhood a proposal to seek binding legislation establishing a Highland Park Architectural Conservation District, and to establish flexible design guidelines to direct future development in the neighborhood.

This chapter presents the PRC's initial proposals regarding the goals, jurisdiction, design requirements and recommendations of the proposed Architectural Conservation District. Further steps, including neighborhood participation, will be needed to establish an Architectural

Conservation District. These are outlined at the end of this chapter.

#### Goals of Highland Park Design Guidelines:

The PRC struggled to achieve an appropriate balance for the Highland Park neighborhood between the goal of historic preservation and the goal of protecting homeowners from onerous design regulations. Concern was expressed that homeowners not be forced into expensive rehabilitation that they could not afford when trying to repair or maintain their homes. The PRC determined that some of the design guidelines should have the force of requirements, and others should simply be recommendations, in an effort to educate current and future residents about the historic qualities of the district.

Discussion also focused on the fact that a substantial amount of new construction is likely in coming years. New housing stock will, of necessity, reflect contemporary housing needs and current building technology. Much needed commercial revitalization may produce other types of new buildings, as well as adaptive reuse of historic residential buildings. The design of new buildings should not mimic, in an architecturally self-conscious way, the housing of previous centuries. It should,



however, be sensitive to preserving the qualities of the existing historic fabric of the neighborhood. The goals of the guidelines and the proposed jurisdiction therefore reflect the effort to balance these concerns:

- ❑ **To preserve the unique physical attributes of the Highland Park district,** including the pastoral character of historic farms and estates, historic pedestrian pathways, pastoral views, remnants of the High and Low Fort colonial redoubts, public squares, parks and open spaces;
- ❑ **To protect the distinct physical characteristics of buildings and street facades** which typify the district;
- ❑ **To preserve historically significant architectural characteristics and details in existing buildings;**
- ❑ **To preserve varied building types** representative of the district's development history

Streetscape: sidewalk, trees and landscape



## Preliminary Design Guidelines

as elaborated in the National Register nomination;

- ❑ **To preserve and enhance the variety and differences of sub-districts within Highland Park**, such as the different typical density, street edge, and types of buildings found on different blocks;
- ❑ **To promote new development which is compatible with historic aspects of the district** while accommodating current and emerging household patterns.

### Architectural Conservation District • Jurisdiction

Design Review is possible for public and private development projects commencing after the adoption of the Architectural Conservation District, according to the following proposed criteria:

- New construction of any type;
- Additions to existing buildings, including dormers, turrets, porches and decks, enclosure of porches, permanent canopies, widow's walks, and any other element which might substantially change the appearance of the building from the exterior;
- Renovations for adaptive reuse of existing buildings and other structures, since proposed reuse could substantially impact the exterior appearance of the building or its surroundings.

### Proposed Guidelines - Streetscape and Site

#### ■ Massing, Proportion & Scale

**Massing** is the aggregate of a building's height, bulk, type and roof angle. **Proportion** refers to the relationship between the width and height of a building or element of a building. **Scale** refers to the measure of a building or any architectural element in relation to a known unit of measure, usually the dimensions of the human body.

**Requirements:** New buildings should be consistent with, and reinforce, the visual character of their context by matching, as closely as is practical, the massing, proportion, and scale of the historic buildings immediately surrounding the proposed construction. New buildings should be designed to be consistent with the height of adjacent structures. Architectural elements and features should also reflect the proportion and scale of adjacent historic buildings.



Typical rowhouse streetscape

New buildings should try to match other scale relationships such as the height of the parlor level (first floor above the street), the size and placement of exterior stairs, the presence of porches, stoops, entrance canopies, and ancillary structures.



Roof, porch alignment, consistent massing

**Recommendations:** Contextual cues should be taken from immediate adjacent historic buildings on both sides of the street because they have the most direct visual relationship with the new design and offer design precedents.

If there is variety in the massing, proportion and scale of existing adjacent buildings, the predominant historic buildings should be used for cues. Existing non-conforming buildings should not be taken as reference.

New buildings have the potential to reinforce the plane of the streetscape and unify buildings of disparate massing. Well designed new buildings will join with existing buildings to define and give identity to adjacent public spaces such as streets, parks, commons, which are the centerpiece of urban community life.

#### ■ Street Alignment

**Requirement:** Placement of new buildings should be consistent with the street alignment and setbacks of the buildings immediately contiguous to the proposed construction.

**Recommendations:** Cues should be taken from the street alignment for one or two adjacent blocks if adjacent lots are vacant. Buildings establish the public realm, by virtue of their placement

from a sidewalk edge and their relationship side by side. A consistent street setback, or street wall, provides a sense of continuity of the streetscape, and makes coherent, predictable and enjoyable streets for pedestrians and vehicles. Street planting and tree allees on public or private land, fences, and other landscape elements also reinforce the consistency of the streetscape, and provide human scale to the environment.



Consistent street alignment

#### ▪ Rhythm of Elements

**Rhythm** is the regular and repeated occurrence of building elements such as windows and doors, bays, dormers, chimneys, etc. The rhythm occurs both horizontally (side by side) as well as vertically, such as windows which align from the top to the bottom of the building.



Repeating rhythm of bow fronts, windows and entries

**Requirements:** New buildings or additions should reflect and complement the rhythm of the architectural elements of existing nearby buildings.

**Recommendations:** The rhythm of articulated building elements, such as bays and bowfronts, window fenestration, entrance doors, porches, chimneys, etc. is a critical aspect of building design. Environments with consistent size, scale and rhythm of elements are coherent, and therefore “readable” by residents and visitors. Vertical alignment and rhythm of elements and the rhythm at the skyline (different roofs, roof details) should be carefully considered.

#### ▪ Street, Building and Landscape Lighting

**Requirements:** Street lights and lamp posts, in new developments or added to existing housing, should be complementary to the general architectural style of the neighborhood, and as consistent as possible in each block. Lampposts should be no more than 14’ above the sidewalk. Lights mounted on buildings should be no more than 10’ above ground, rather than at roof level.

**Recommendations:** Decorative lighting and post lamps are encouraged at new and existing housing. Only lights that blend with the surrounding historic character should be utilized. No electrical conduit should be exposed at the building walls.

#### ▪ Fences, Walls, Hedgerows

**Requirements:** A fence at the property line must allow view; a solid fence is not allowed. The use of masonry any higher than 30” is also disallowed. Masonry walls should be used only as retaining walls.

**Recommendations:** The front edge of a property should be defined with a fence, line of trees or other planting materials or stone walls. A see-through fence from two to

four feet high, and not higher than 4 feet provides a “friendly” experience for pedestrians in the neighborhood. Where a multi-building development is undertaken, there should be a defined sense of entry into the site, including boundary definition and lighting.



Decorative Iron fence adds scale and definition

#### ▪ Trees and Planting

**Requirements:** Existing mature trees over 8” caliper shall be pruned and protected.

**Recommendations:** Existing trees and vegetation masses should be preserved as much as possible. They provide a natural backdrop for new development and a reminder of the pastoral quality of many areas in the district. New trees, shrubs and other plantings are strongly encouraged, both at property lines and within the property. Indigenous flowering and fruit species add color, interest and wildlife habitat. Plants and vegetation of various textures, sizes and colors near buildings enhance the relationship of buildings to their surroundings and reduce the perceived scale of buildings.



## Preliminary Design Guidelines



Community garden

### ▪ Pedestrian Paths and Open Spaces

**Recommendations:** There are existing pedestrian pathways and stairs running through the district, some of which are easements on private property, others are “private ways” functionally part of the public realm. Wherever possible, these pathways should be maintained, preserved and enhanced, thus allowing pedestrians an alternative path away from vehicular traffic.

Alleyways, side yards and vacant lots could be utilized to reinforce and encourage the development of new pedestrian paths, dog walks, and bikeways for children and adults, connecting to the existing paths and to existing gardens and other open spaces. Connection of these paths to mass transit stops would further encourage their use as alternative routes.

Existing open spaces should be preserved, and their maintenance guaranteed. Where new development requires use of previously designated open space or community gardens, these

should be replaced with equivalent or better locations.



Pedestrian path through an urban park

### ▪ Topography

**Requirements:** Substantial topographic changes will not be allowed. Debris and unpaved, non-landscaped areas are prohibited.

**Recommendations:** As far as possible, existing overall site topography should be maintained with minimum cut and fill.

### ▪ Accessibility

**Requirements:** Handicapped access for historic buildings and sites shall respect the historic character of the property.

**Recommendations:** All new or renovated commercial buildings, and those used by the public, as well as parking lots, and new open spaces should be designed for handicapped access. Efforts should be made to provide accessible and adaptable housing in new residential developments, complying with appropriate state and federal laws.

## Preliminary Proposed Guidelines - Building Design

### ▪ Skyline

**Requirements:** The existing height of buildings in a block should be maintained. Where there are different precedents in a block, the height of abutting historic buildings shall be matched, or the new building(s) shall match the average of existing historic buildings in the block. Height refers to the top ridge of a sloped roof, not the highest point of a widow’s walk, turret, or other special element. The height of the first floor of new buildings shall be equal to that of adjacent houses or roughly 3’-6”.

**Recommendations:** The skyline, like all edges, is an important aspect of building design, especially in urban areas. A consistent line should be maintained with adjacent buildings. Towers, pinnacles, and other occasional punctuations of a building’s roofline add interest. A cornice line that is articulated also adds visual interest to the silhouette of the street and knits the sky with the roofs of buildings.



Varied Roof Elements create a dynamic skyline

### ▪ Roof Types and Pitches

**Requirements:** Roof pitch, overhang, eave line, cornice line

and gutter placement shall match or be consistent with those of surrounding buildings. The direction of gabled roofs relative to the street shall match those of historic adjacent houses (either gable end facing street, or eave line facing street). Flat roofs shall have cornice projections, and shall be similar in detailing to existing historic flat roofs.



Roofs broken by Dormers

**Recommendations:** Roofs play a major role in the appearance of buildings, because they are such a dominant element. The pitch of a gable roof should not be less than 7 in 12; Such steeper roofs are more typical in the district and more desirable for consistency with the historic character. Roof trim boards and edges should be articulated similarly to the existing historic houses. Where limited contextual clues are available, a one or two block area should be used as reference.

#### ▪ Windows

**Requirements:** All windows must have exterior trim and sills. The windows must be of similar size, proportion (ratio of width to height) and type (double hung, typically) to windows of surrounding historic buildings. Where adding onto an existing building, the window size, type and mullions should match and be consistent with the style of those of the existing building.

**Recommendations:** Windows are prominent elements on the façade of any structure and therefore, the window configuration should conform to adjacent buildings in the block.

In new construction or additions, the size of the window opening, relationship to the wall, size of the window panes, type of window all need to be carefully considered and consistent with surrounding historic buildings.

#### ▪ Entryways

**Requirements:** Front entrances shall face the street, with porches, decks, stairs, and doors consistent with adjacent buildings and with the style of the house under consideration. Porches must be of a functional depth and width. Entry doors shall be clearly articulated and detailed.

**Recommendations:** These elements are well articulated and detailed in the historic buildings, and demand similar treatment today for consistency of the quality of the built environment. All elements at the entry should be considered together: the doors, trims, porch roof, columns, lighting and other elements should be proportional to each other and to the building as a whole.

New buildings and new elements on existing buildings should complement the old, and add rather than detract from the character of the old. New elements at extant buildings should be consistent with the style of that building



Arched entry at sidewalk, door recessed

#### ▪ Porches and Add-Ons

**Requirements:** Porches, decks, ramps, stairs, canopies and other add-ons, visible from the street or adjacent properties, shall be consistent in size, proportion, location, distance from sidewalk, and design with similar elements found in surrounding buildings.

**Recommendations:** When added to existing historic buildings, such elements should be consistent with the style and detailing of the existing building, and should be reversible by future owners if so desired. However, in all new construction, all such elements, including ramps for handicap access, should be well-integrated into the building design and non-reversible.



Porches at side transforms the building and changes its entry

#### ▪ Architectural Detailing

**Recommendations:** In renovations to historic buildings, every effort should be made to preserve and reuse existing architectural



## Preliminary Design Guidelines

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detailing such as doors and windows, cornice details, corbels, dentils, window and door molding, column details, arches, pediments etc. Where new elements are added, these must be consistent with the style and period of the building.

In new construction, care should be taken to be consistent with existing elements and the relationships between them. Much of the interest in older buildings comes from the fact that they contain many features and details that are conspicuously missing from more recently constructed houses. Details make a building identifiable and perhaps unique. Architectural elaboration should be considered as a basic element of good design, rather than a luxury.



Porch columns & brackets, railings and window trim contribute to building style

### ■ Building Materials

**Recommendation:** Wood siding, either clapboard or shingle, should be used wherever possible on wood frame housing. Vinyl and aluminum siding are strongly discouraged as cladding materials. However, if vinyl or aluminum siding is used, trim and details consistent with the adjacent historic buildings must be included, either in wood or in synthetic siding. These include but are not limited to elements such as cornerboards, fascia and frieze

boards, brackets, columns, arches and window trim.

Brick masonry is strongly encouraged for rowhouse or similar housing styles. Masonry should be consistent in size and coursing to the historic buildings. Stucco, metal siding and other materials inconsistent with the historic character of the district are strongly discouraged.

### ■ Off-Street Parking

**Requirement:** All new residential development should include off-street parking at the side or back of buildings, so that parking does not dominate the front yard. If parking can only be located in the front, due to lot size limitations, it should be adequately masked with vegetation and/or a fence.

### ■ HVAC and Other Mechanical Equipment

**Requirement:** Any HVAC equipment or other mechanical equipment shall be concealed or screened both from public streets and abutting properties. No HVAC equipment should be put in the front yard or the front portion of the side yard.

**Recommendations:** No pipes, conduits or ducts should be at the front of the house or visible from the street, other than those required by local utility companies, and these should be screened by planting materials wherever possible.

Roof mounted equipment should be placed behind sloped roofs, parapets, or in the central portion of flat roofs beyond site lines from ground level. Utility lines should be underground wherever practicable. All other utility

equipment, loading docks and service areas should be screened with vegetation, walls and fences.

### ■ Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Design

**Recommendations:** Efforts should be made to integrate sustainable design and energy efficiency into new or renovated buildings in the district. Passive solar design might simply determine number and location of windows, skylights, etc in the building, or might include solar panels as well.

These elements shall be designed in such a way that they are not noticeable, and do not detract from the architectural character of the neighborhood.

## Conclusion/ Next Steps

These preliminary design guidelines should be seen as the first step toward establishing a Highland Park Architectural Conservation District. A great deal more community discussion is needed before the guidelines can be finalized. However, they do represent the ideas and efforts of people striving to maintain the unique historical and architectural character of Highland Park as the inevitable pressures of development are felt in the neighborhood.

A petition to create a Highland Park Architectural Conservation District was signed by ten registered Boston voters, and accepted for further study by vote of the Boston Landmarks Commission at a preliminary hearing. An Architectural Conservation District would provide design review for all projects as required by the standards and criteria developed

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for the district by the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) in partnership with the community.

For this process to move forward, the Mayor would appoint a study committee consisting of five BLC members and six persons who have demonstrated interest in the subject under consideration; City Council confirmation of the appointments also is required. The Study Committee, assisted by BLC staff, would prepare a Study Report for potential designation of an Architectural Conservation District. The Study Report would finalize the standards and criteria for design review. These would not need to be as inclusive and detailed for an Architectural Conservation District as for a Landmark District such as the South End. For instance, binding review could be limited to new construction, major additions and rehabilitation projects, and demolition. The Study Report would contain a description of the district as well as its historic and architectural significance in terms of the criteria for designation. Upon reviewing alternatives to designation, the Study Committee would include its recommendations for action in the Study Report.

Upon completion of the Study Report, the Boston Landmarks Commission would hold a hearing for potential designation of the Architectural Conservation District. Before the hearing, the Study Report would be available for review, and at the hearing public testimony would be taken. The BLC would then vote on the designation. If passed by a 2/3 majority, the designation would be presented to the Mayor. If the Mayor does not overturn a vote for designation, it is presented to the City Council. If the vote is upheld by the City Council, the designation

of the Architectural Conservation District would become official. The Mayor would then appoint commission members to serve in reviewing proposed architectural changes in the district as required in the designation Study Report.



Elaborate Entryway





Hale Survey of Roxbury

## Appendix 1 - Glossary of Architectural Terms

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**Bargeboard:** a decorative board placed along the sloping cornice line of a gable roof, sometimes known as vergeboard.

**Bay:** the division of the façade of a building into discrete units based on the number of openings. A façade with a door and two windows would be described as a three-bay house.

**Bay window:** a rectangular or polygonal window which projects outward from the façade of the house.

**Bracket:** a small carved or saw-cut wooden support that helps carry the weight of an overhanging or projecting element.

**Clapboard:** a long, thin horizontal board graduating in thickness from one edge to the other; the thick end overlapping the thin when applied.

**Classical:** design elements that follow the principles of Greek, Roman, and Renaissance architecture.

**Console:** an ornamental bracket with an “S” or scroll-shaped form; used to support a door hood or cornice

**Corbelling:** a projected course of brick or stone which forms a ledge; decorative brickwork at the cornice level.

**Corner board:** a vertical board at the corner of a structure; used as decorative trim and as a means to protect the ends of the clapboard siding

**Cornice:** a horizontal molded board enclosing the juncture of the wall and roof framing at the eaves.

**Dentil:** a small, rectangular block closely set in a row; runs along the underside of a projecting cornice; classical decorative motif used locally in Greek Revival, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival architecture.

**Door or window hood:** a scroll-supported projection which shelters the main entry or windows.

**Dormer:** a small window projecting from the slope of a roof.

**Eave:** the edge of a roof that projects over an outside wall.

**Entablature:** the horizontal member of classical architecture comprising the architrave, frieze, and cornice.

**Façade:** the principal face or front of a building.

**Fluted:** parallel grooving on columns, pilasters, and other surfaces as an embellishment.

**Frieze:** the central section of the entablature; also a wide plain or adorned board running the width of the building beneath the eave.

**Gable end:** the end of a building with a gable in the roof section.

**Gambrel roof:** a ridged roof with two slopes on each side, the lower slope having the steeper pitch.

**Lintel:** a horizontal structural member that supports a load over an opening.

**Mansard roof:** a roof having two slopes on all four sides, the lower slope much steeper than the upper.

**Mullion:** a wide vertical member separating panes of glass in a casement window or panels in a door.

**Muntin:** one of the thin strips of wood used to hold panes of glass within a window.

**Parapet:** a low wall rising above the cornice.

**Pediment:** a triangular gable above a window, door, or wall.

**Portico:** an entrance porch supported by columns.

**Quoins:** blocks of stone (or beveled wood panels imitating stone) laid in alternating courses, one short and



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one long, which define the corners of a building.

**Reveal:** the side of a door or window opening.

**Sill:** the lower horizontal member of a window frame, door frame, or wall.

**Soffit:** the underside of an architectural element.

**Spindle work:** a series of short, turned rods which forms a decorative band or screen.

**Transom:** a window opening above a door – rectangular, fan-shaped, or elliptical.

**Sash:** the frame in which the panes of a window are set.

**Segmental arch:** a round arch.

**Setback:** the distance that a house is set back from the property line.

## Appendix 2 – Endangered Building Selection Criteria

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Property: \_\_\_\_\_ Building Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ownership: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Construction: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupancy: \_\_\_\_\_

## PROPOSED SELECTION CRITERIA FOR PROPERTIES TO BE EVALUATED

ARCHITECTURAL, HISTORICAL AND URBAN SIGNIFICANCE OF PROPERTY	THREAT TO PROPERTY'S STABILITY		
	Structural Instability	Risks Weather Penetration	Risks Loss or Deterioration of Following Architectural Elements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building is at risk of structural failure or ongoing deterioration but is preservable</li> <li>If building is in imminent risk of failure, is it too late to preserve?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roof deterioration</li> <li>Likely weather penetration at perimeter walls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Porch</li> <li>Roof Details</li> <li>Cupolas &amp; Windows Walks</li> <li>Windows &amp; Doors</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Previously identified in BLC inventory as significant</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently in demo delay process</li> <li>Architectural or historical significance</li> </ul>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>National Register – Contributing to the district</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Highly visible site within district</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Located at a district entry and/or forms backdrop to entry</li> <li>Located along a major pathway through the district</li> <li>Helps define edge of district and conveys sense of identity for district</li> <li>Located at visible corner</li> </ul>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Anchors or stabilizes area within district</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abuts an important public space</li> <li>First building to be rehabbed at edge of open space and has enough presence to encourage more</li> <li>First building to be renovated in a cluster of properties in poor condition</li> </ul>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Acts as bridge between areas being rehabilitated</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seeds future redevelopment</li> <li>Reduces vast vacant area</li> </ul>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>House representative of typical historic period, typical urban design</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal</li> <li>Greek Revival</li> <li>Italianate/ Second Empire</li> <li>Carpenter Gothic</li> <li>Queen Anne</li> <li>Masonry Rowhouse</li> </ul>			

## Appendix 3 – Photo and Illustration Credits

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For historic photographs and engravings:

The Roxbury Action Program in their publication, “Highland Park, 1630—1977,”  
the Museum of Afro-American History, and  
the Boston Landmarks Commission.

For historic maps:

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, State House Library.

For current maps:

The City of Boston, Department of Neighborhood Development.

For current photographs:

Lisa Cole, Lisa Hershkopf,

For drawings of historic styles:

Rebecca Berry